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COUNCIL

UPDATE

ONTARIO ADVISORY COUNCIL ON WOMEN'S ISSUES

SPRING 1988

Council is Waiting at Eight



Sandra Kerr, Vice-President

Waiting for appointments, that is. Since **Sam Ion's** three-year term ended October 18, Council has been without a president and is short seven members. But until new appointments are made, Vice-President **Sandra Kerr** leads the Council.

Ion, who declined a second term, has resumed her journalism career at the *Toronto Sun*. **Dorothy Kirby**, **Ed Arundell** and **Sarah Band** also completed three year terms.

Lack of membership, however, has not meant an idle Council. Plans are forging ahead for our June conference, **Motherhood in a Changing Society**, June 9, 10 and 11. This three-day conference will explore the expectations and stresses placed by society on women and mothers. **Sheila Copps**, the controversial Hamilton MP, and **Betty Steele**, author of *The Feminist Takeover* will open the conference Thursday, June 9th with a debate of the resolution: Families Benefit From Feminism. Friday and Saturday will feature panel discussion on issues such as images of motherhood in the media, the value of housework and surrogate mothers. It's all free and limited child-care is available. **Look for the flyer inside with further details.**

Through ongoing committee work, Council has identified priorities for the coming year. Some of these include: tax reform, housing, older women, disabled women and franco-Ontario women.

Council Checklist

☒ **Meetings with Ministers:** Council has met with Gregory Sorbara, Minister Responsible for Women's Issues, to discuss appointments, to present the Sole Support Mothers Brief and most recently, to support the call for a Royal Commission on the Social Impact of Reproductive Technologies (See page 2). In addition, Council individually met with these ministers to discuss the Sole Support Mothers Brief recommendations: John Sweeney, Minister of Community and Social Services; Chaviva Hosek, Minister of Housing and Elinor Caplan, Minister of Health.

In discussions with Mr. Sweeney, Council highlighted the recommendations regarding adequacy of income, improvement to the employment incen-

tive programs and improved communications with social workers. Ms. Hosek was very interested in Council's housing recommendations and asked Council to find out what kinds of housing women want, where it should be located, and what it would look like. Several health recommendations were brought to Ms. Caplan's attention and Council stressed the need to change the health care system to a more holistic approach.

The entire Brief contains 93 recommendations, formulated by sole support mothers during last June's conference, and is available through Council office.

☒ **Meech Lake:** Late last summer, some 100 women representing a large cross-section of women's groups met in Toronto to discuss the Meech Lake Accord. Women were outraged that the government was ignoring their protests about women's equality rights being put at risk by the Accord. A steering committee was formed to devise an action plan.

On October 18, a day-long session was co-ordinated by Council and the steering committee to educate women's groups on the Accord. The session opened with an excellent overview of the Accord, presented by lawyer and former Council vice-president, Linda Silver Dranoff. (Available from Council office, in both English and French). Through panel presentations and workshop discussions, women heard a number of expert opinions arguing that the Meech Lake Accord may supercede the hard-won Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

The steering committee evolved into a group now known as Ad Hoc Ontario. Their aim is to lobby the government about women's concerns regarding the Meech Lake Accord and to encourage women's groups to participate in the on-going government consultations. (See hotline numbers box, page 2.)

Council met with representatives from the Ontario Women's Directorate, the Attorney General's Office and

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Council Checklist

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other women's groups to hear the various viewpoints on this issue. At press time, Council is in the process of formulating its own position and will be submitting a statement to the Select Committee on Constitutional Reform March 31. This submission will be available to the public in April.

Visible Minority Women: Council has been meeting regularly with representatives from visible minority women's groups. As a follow-up to these consultations, Council plans to recommend an action plan to the government.

Discriminatory language training policy: Council has written to Premier Peterson urging that Ontario lobby the federal government to end its discriminatory language training policy and has called for this issue to be put on the next First Ministers conference agenda.

Currently, immigrant women do not have the same access to language training subsidies as immigrant men. With no language skills, immigrant women remain employed forever in jobs with low pay and poor working conditions.

The Women's Legal Action Fund (LEAF), working with the Centre for Spanish Speaking Peoples, is in the process of mounting a Charter challenge on language accessibility. Council has joined with 35 other organizations in endorsing this challenge and will continue to work with immigrant and visible minority women's groups to lobby for change to discriminatory language training policies.

Pensions: In reviewing Canada Pension Plan Survivor Benefits, the federal government circulated proposals for change. Council invited a group of chartered accountants, with experience in the pension and tax field, to a meeting for the purpose of studying this consultation paper to help formulate a response. In Council's response document, concern was expressed about the trend to force older women, who have traditionally been homemakers, or who have participated in the work force only marginally, to become self-sufficient. Since Ontario is one of the provinces holding veto powers over any federal government action, Council reiterated the same points in a letter to the Treasurer and urged Ontario to demand wide consultation by the federal government before changes are implemented.

Council also submitted its Pensions Brief to the Task Force on Inflation Protection for Employment Pension Plans, highlighting the section on inflation protection for private pensions.

Consultation with the Treasurer: Hon. Robert Nixon, Treasurer of Ontario, invited Council to participate in the budget consultation process. Council highlighted areas for Mr. Nixon's attention in the areas of sole support mothers, disabled women, battered women, pensions, post-secondary education, and training and re-training programs. Again, Council reiterated its long standing recommendation to initiate a review of all government programs for their economic impact on women and to establish a long-term strategy for the improvement of women in the economy.

Reproductive Technologies: Surrogate embryo transfers, surrogate mothers, test tube babies, artificial insemination, biological mothers, frozen embryos — these are examples of the revolution in human reproduction. The question to ask is: do we as a

society want this revolution to continue without limits, and without a full understanding of the implications?

Council has joined with the dozens of groups and individuals urging the Ontario government to support the establishment of a federal Royal Commission on the social implications of new reproductive technologies. Council has stated that such a commission should be headed by a woman and be mandated to hold broad consultations, conduct research and carry out public education on the issue. Council has also called for such a commission to be made up mostly of women and should include women from a wide variety of backgrounds, rather than from only medical and legal professions.

You can reach the Canadian Coalition for a Royal Commission on New Reproductive Technologies through Margrit Eichler at O.I.S.E., (416) 923-6641.

ATTENTION ACTION REQUIRED

Abortion: Council's stand on abortion has always been pro-choice. Since the Supreme Court's decision, however, newspapers seem to be filled with reports of only the anti-choice view. It's important the government hear **both** sides of this issue. **MAKE YOUR VIEWS KNOWN. Telephone, Telegram** (public opinion messages via CNCP Telecommunications cost \$3.50 + tax for up to 15 words), or **write** (no postage required for letters to the federal government) to these ministers in the House of Commons, Ottawa, Ontario, K1A 0A6:

Rt. Hon. Brian Mulroney
Prime Minister
(613) 992-4211
Hon. Ray Hnatyshyn, M.P.
Minister of Justice
(613) 992-4621
Hon. Jake Epp
Minister of Health and Welfare
(613) 957-0200

All Female Establishment Study: The Pay Equity Commission is undertaking a study of the systemic gender discrimination in pay rates for work performed in those areas of the economy traditionally staffed by predominately female workers, i.e. childcare. There will be public consultations and submissions are being sought. For further information call the Pay Equity Commission information hotline: 416-481-3315 or 481-3314; 1-800-387-8887 or 1-800-387-8813.

Work in Progress

- **Action On Issues** a series of easy-to-read booklets, accompanied by graphics and illustrations, will provide an overview of each subject. An extensive bibliography will appear at the back for those interested in further reading.

- **Women and Health**, the first in the series, will be published in the spring. **Childcare and Sole Support Mothers**, the next two, will be published this fall. They will be free and available through Council office.

- **Income Tax:** Council is preparing a background paper on the impact to Ontario women of federal tax reform proposals. This paper will be available in May.

- **Labour Legislation Review:** Council is embarking on a review of the Employment Standards Act, and other related labour legislation, focussing on the barriers to women contained in these laws.

- **Reproductive Technologies:** Council's paper on New Reproductive Technologies is complete and will be available at the June conference.

MEECH LAKE HOTLINE

Ad Hoc Ontario has several toll free hotlines:
(416) 964-1232, ext 297. If you live within the 416 area code, but are long distance, call 1-800-268-7002. If you're outside the 416 area code, call 1-800-268-7205.

For Your Interest

There is now a **Women's Health Bureau** in the Ministry of Health. The manager is Jessica Hill, who was hired to open the bureau last October. "We are not an information bureau," advised Hill. "We promote health issues within the government and we are also encouraging outside women's groups to come to the bureau for help in developing government contacts. For example, if a group wanted to set up a women's health centre in a hospital setting, the bureau could help them contact the right ministry people."

Ms. Hill represents the Ministry on several inter-ministerial committees and calls the bureau an advisory body, providing and receiving information on women's health issues.

The bureau can be reached at 416-965-0460.

The National Action Committee publishes a quarterly **housing newsletter** reporting on the key housing issues across Canada. It's free, and you can receive it by **mailing** in your request to NAC, Housing Committee, 344 Bloor St. W., #505, Toronto, Ontario M5S 1W9.

Reading List: The Canadian Advisory Council has recently published two books **Growing Strong**, about women in agriculture and **Integration and Participation**, about women's work in the home and labour force. As well, they have background papers on the following issues: free trade, women in politics, women as entrepreneurs, immigrant women, survivor benefits and the gap between services women require and those available. All publications can be obtained free by writing the Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women, 110 O'Connor St., 9th Floor, Box 1541, Station B, Ottawa, Ontario K0P 5R5, (613) 992-4975. **Cover Your Assets**, a guide to farm partnerships, explains in basic language the benefits of a partnership agreement. Published by Women for the Survival of Agriculture, you can obtain it by sending a self-addressed, stamped (37¢) envelope to: D. Harkin, R.R.1, Winchester, Ontario, K0C 2K0. Quebec Advisory Council has just released the proceedings from their October reproductive technologies conference. Called, **Sortir La Maternité du Laboratoire**, it contains articles in English and French. Free, from Conseil du Statut de la femme, 8 rue Cook, bureau 300, Québec, Québec, G1R 5J7, (418) 643-4326. The Ontario Women's Directorate has issued a series of easy-to-read pamphlets on recent changes to Ontario **family law** which provide a basic understanding about your legal rights concerning child and spousal support; custody, access, abduction; your home

and property; child protection and adoption; immigration and wife assault. Also available in Italian, French, Chinese and Vietnamese. These can be

obtained free, through the Ontario Women's Directorate, 480 University Ave., 2nd Floor, Toronto, Ontario, M5G 1V1, (416) 597-4593.

PARLEZ NOUS DE VOUS

Bien que le mandat du Conseil consultatif de l'Ontario sur la condition féminine soit de représenter les aspirations et les besoins de toutes les Ontariennes, il n'a malheureusement pas toujours été en mesure de rejoindre les Franco-Ontariennes. Néanmoins il tente présentement de remédier à la situation. Ainsi trois francophones siègent maintenant au Conseil.

De plus, certaines publications du Conseil sont maintenant disponibles en français. Elles le seront toutes sous peu grâce à la loi 8.

Par ailleurs, afin de mieux comprendre et par le fait même de mieux représenter les aspirations et les besoins des

Franco-Ontariennes, le Conseil travaille présentement à l'organisation d'une rencontre avec tous les groupes féminins francophones de la province. Bien que l'endroit ne soit pas encore arrêté, la rencontre est prévue pour l'automne 1988. On devrait communiquer sous peu avec votre groupe à ce sujet. Les personnes qui n'appartiennent pas à un groupe particulier mais qui s'intéressent à la condition féminine francophone sont aussi les bienvenues.

D'autre part, n'hésitez pas à communiquer avec nous afin de nous faire connaître vos activités, vos intérêts et vos besoins. Danielle Coulombe, 705-372-1781, Sandra Manzig, 519-966-1656 Anne Rochon Ford, 416-323-7710

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

In our continuing effort to find out what you think, we'd like to know your opinion on the questions below. Please take a moment to answer, and return to:

**The Ontario Advisory Council
on Women's Issues
880 Bay Street, 5th Floor
Toronto, Ontario M7A 1N3**

Do you think the Meech Lake Accord puts women's rights at risk? _____ Yes _____ No

Do you think the Pay Equity Act will benefit women in Ontario? _____ Yes _____ No

What do you think is an important women's issue today?

The Council is an advisory body to the Ontario Government on all matters pertaining to women. Established at arms length from the Government, it is in the unique position of being the *ONLY* official advisory body on women's issues. This means that the Government has made a commitment to listen to Council's views and recommendations, and this special relationship allows Government's direction and policies to be effectively challenged.

There are 16 members, including a President, all of whom are appointed by Cabinet on a part-time basis for three-year terms. Members come from around the province, and for the most part, do not represent organizations or groups.

The Council attempts to bring a balance of women's views from across the province to the attention of the Government. Its unique relationship with the Government provides a direct channel to the ears of the decision makers of Ontario.

COUNCIL MEMBERS

Sandra Kerr, Vice President, Oakville
Danielle Coulombe, Hearst
Bernice Dubec-Heald, Thunder Bay
Dianne Harkin, Winchester
Sandra Manzig, Windsor
Susan McDonald, Arva
Ceta Ramkhalawansingh, Toronto
Anne Rochon Ford, Toronto

SPEAKERS: Members of Council are available for speaking engagements. Please write to Council with details of your meeting.

COUNCIL STAFF

Bridget Vianna, Executive Officer
Lydia Oleksyn, Public Relations Officer
Elayne Ceifets Osher, Researcher/
 Conference Co-ordinator
Rita Kelly, Secretary
Daphne Hay, Receptionist

COUNCIL ADDRESS

880 Bay Street, 5th Floor
 Toronto, Ontario M7A 1N3
 (416) 965-5824

MEMBERS NEWS AND VIEWS

Continuing our series of getting to know Council members, Ceta Ramkhalawansingh presents her own opinions on the Pay Equity Act.

PAY EQUITY ... STILL TO COME

by Ceta Ramkhalawansingh



On January 1, 1988, the Pay Equity Act, instituted to help reduce the "wage gap" between men and women

workers, came into effect. This "wage gap" is the approximately 40% difference between the average wage paid to women and men. Many women hope the Pay Equity Act will reduce this 40% wage gap.

But it won't and it can't.

The history of wage laws for women is interesting. In 1951, Ontario became the first jurisdiction in Canada to pass an equal pay law. The Female Fair Remuneration Act ensured men and women were paid the same if they did the same work. This law became part of the Ontario Human Rights Code in 1962.

But often, employers got around these equal pay provisions by ensuring men did not do exactly the same work. The addition of one or two extra duties meant they could avoid paying women equally.

The Employment Standards Act incorporated equal pay provisions in 1968 requiring the **same** pay rate for men and women doing the **same** work, the performance of which required equal skill, effort and responsibility under the **same** working conditions.

An Ontario Court of Appeal decision in 1970 established that the **same** work did not mean **identical** work. Therefore, in 1974, the Employment Standards Act was changed, requiring equal pay for substantially the same work demanding substantially the same skill, effort, responsibility and performance under similar working conditions.

Despite these laws, women continued to be disadvantaged in the workplace. The Employment Standards Act had several exemptions from the equal pay provisions such as merit, seniority, piece-work or bonus systems. In addition, the composite test, where the total value of points assigned to skill, effort, responsibility and working conditions would determine if two jobs should receive equal pay, was not used. Instead, the Employment Standards

Act, each of the four criteria had to be the same value. This often resulted in the unsatisfactory resolution of equal pay complaints.

It was this law, with all its flaws, combined with the disadvantaged situation of women, that led to the demand for equal pay for work of equal value. Supporters of this approach to equal pay laws wanted to compare dissimilar jobs rather than jobs which were "substantially the same".

In 1985, Bill 105 A Public Service Pay Equity Act, which professed to be legislation based on the principle of equal pay for work of equal value, was introduced. This bill applied only to the broader public sector and provincial government employees. After much debate, lobbying and rancour, the bill was allowed to die. A new bill was introduced which included both public and private sectors and became known as the Pay Equity Act.

This Act does not apply to firms with less than 10 employees; comparisons must be made between jobs which are predominantly male and female; and these must take place within the bargaining unit first.

Council recommended that pay equity be a basic labour standard, available to individuals and groups. It should have included employment equity measures to address the fact that men and women do not work in the same establishments.

Council also recommended that the legislation include all workers, regardless of organization size, gender predominance or the existence of comparison groups. Suggestions were made that domestic, childcare and garment industry workers were among the groups requiring additional protection.

Despite my personal lack of enthusiasm for the new Pay Equity Act, there are two positive features. First, the notion of equal value is enshrined in law and second, employer and employee representatives will be required to justify their compensation practices on certain criteria. These features, however, are not sufficient to save us from a law which is intended to reduce only about 3 to 5% of the wage gap. Some people will get rich, but it won't be the women who are covered by the new law.

A close study of Ontario's new Pay Equity Act will show that we have a lot to be concerned about and still a long way to go before women are paid equally.